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ABSTRACT

An overview of the nature and content of doctoral study in higher education is presented, focusing on an analysis of the literature indicating potential outcomes of these programs. The type of training for academic administrators and the significance of this training for degree recipients and for colleges and universities are examined. The study questions whether it is feasible to expect that graduates of these programs are more prepared for administration or behave differently than administrators who have not completed these programs. The nature and content of doctoral study in higher education is not well understood by individuals unacquainted with higher education programs. An examination of the literature indicates: (1) discussion about the knowledge base in the field of higher education dominates the literature; (2) the skills most emphasized are those emphasized in graduate programs generally (research and writing skills); and (3) the outcome of conceptual competence has received the most attention. Lack of agreement about programmatic purposes affects the ability to higher education programs to evaluate themselves and develop evidence of their effectiveness. The effectiveness of program graduates and programs cannot be fully assessed until there is a better understanding of what knowledge and skills are needed in university and college administration. Not all faculty members are uniformly committed to the programmatic purpose of preparing administrators, and this is a hinderance to assessing the effectiveness of graduates. Contains 59 references. (SM)

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Doctoral Study in Programs of Higher Education: Overview and Prospects

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Presented at the 1989 Annual Meeting of the

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Ritz-Carlton, Buckhead in Atlanta, Georgia, November 2-5, 1989. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

Since World War II higher education has become a major factor in American society. Currently there are over 3,500 colleges and universities enrolling more than 13,000,000 students (Evangelauf, 1989; CHE Almanac, 1989). Many of these institutions have become complex organizations with a large administrative infrastructure responsible to a variety of constituencies (Hamlin et al 1979). Nowadays administrators must not only direct and manage day-to-day institutional operations, they must also be knowledgeable about federal and state regulations, alert to the needs of business and industry yet able to withstand undue pressures from them, and capable of dealing with institutional contraction and financial difficulties in a period of increasing concern for accountability (Chibucos and Green, 1989; Hartle, 1986; Mitchell, 1987; Rasch, Hutchison, and Tollefson, 1986). In addition, administrators face an increasingly diverse student population, with an aging faculty that is sometimes insensitive to or uncomfortable with the changing student profile (Bowen and Schuster, 1986; Richardson, Fisk, and Odun, 1983).

The need for administrators who have been formally prepared to deal with the increasing complexity of higher education administration seems obvious, yet higher education administration is one of the few professions where formal training is not usually a requirement. While graduate study in higher education has served as professional preparation for many college and university administrators (Dressel and Mayhew, 1974; Moore, 1981; Moore, Martorana, and Twombly, 1985), the majority of today's

college and university administrators have not formally studied higher education administration. Partly as a result, the nature and content of doctoral study in higher education is not well understood by individuals unacquainted with higher education programs. Since these programs are a source of administrators for academe, it is important to know what kind of training they provide and to evaluate the significance of this training for degree recipients and for colleges and universities. Can we expect that graduates of these programs are more prepared for administration or behave differently than administrators who have not completed these programs?

At least a partial answer to this question may be found in a review of the literature about doctoral study in higher education. Several ERIC and Dissertation Abstracts searches as well as manual searches of the major higher education journals yielded over 120 publications on some aspect of doctoral study in the field of higher education. In this paper I draw upon much of this literature to provide an overview of the nature and content of doctoral study in higher education. Specifically, after a brief look at the development of graduate study in higher education (defined as a major concentration in higher education at the doctoral level), I will analyze the literature indicating potential outcomes of these programs. I will then conclude with a discussion of the prospects for these programs.

History of the Study of Higher Education

While the proliferation of full-fledged doctoral programs for training professionals in higher education is a relatively recent phenomenon, higher education as an object of study within American colleges and universities is not. Its roots stretch back to 1893, when G. Stanley Hall, Clark University's first president, offered the first course on higher education. In the early 1900s other institutions such as Johns Hopkins University and the University of Minnesota began offering courses in higher education. However, it was not until the 1920s that formal programs of study came into being, with two in the Midwest (University of Chicago and the Ohio State University) and one in the Northeast (Teachers College, Columbia University) (Ewing and Stickler, 1964; Williams, 1984). During the 1920s a number of institutions began offering graduate-level courses in higher education, including Purdue, the University of Pittsburgh, New York University, the University of Kentucky, Yale, and Cornell (Dibden, 1965; Palmer, 1930). Most of these courses focused on preparing students for their faculty roles and in particular their teaching. From 1923 to 1945, 27 institutions began offering courses in higher education, while 64 more institutions developed offerings during the period from 1945 to 1963 (Burnett, 1972; Ewing and Stickler, 1964).

Prior to the 1950s institutions were more likely to offer courses rather than to create formal programs of study in higher education. With the expansion of higher education after World

War II, the field of higher education began to appear as a graduate program of study to provide formally trained administrators for the new colleges and universities. It was also during the 1950s that external funding was first given to support the study of higher education (Ewing, 1963; Peterson, 1973; Pemberton, 1980).

During the 1960s the public sector of higher education grew dramatically, largely because of the growth of community colleges. The consequent need for administrators, particularly at the middle management level, accelerated the development of higher education programs (Semas, 1974), which were aimed at providing "knowledgeable individuals specifically trained in matters of growth, expansion, and quality" (Dressel and Mayhew, 1974, p. 17). In the late 1960s 53 programs were identified as offering a higher education concentration at the doctoral level (Rogers, 1969).

Higher education programs continued to grow in number during the 1970s and 1980s. In the late 1970s 70 doctoral-level programs were identified (Johnson and Drewry, 1982), and in the late 1980s 88 programs have been identified (Mason and Townsend, 1988). In the mid-1980s the average number of PhD students in a higher education program was 46.2, and the average number of EdD was 33.8 (Crosson and Nelson, 1986).

Outcomes of Higher Education Programs

An underlying assumption of these higher education doctoral

programs is that administrators who have been formally prepared are more likely to be effective administrators than those who have not. A necessary step in determining the validity of this assumption is ascertaining the probable outcomes of professional preparation in higher education administration. While the literature on various aspects of the curriculum of higher education doctoral programs is abundant, almost none of this literature directly addresses programmatic outcomes.[1] However, a sense of probable programmatic outcomes can be teased from this literature by viewing it through the conceptual framework of professional preparation outcomes developed by Stark, Lowther, and Hagerty (1986).

Believing that the definition of professional education as technical education is "far too simplistic" (p. 17), Stark, Lowther, and Hagerty sought a clearer sense of the nature of professional education, which they prefer to call "professional preparation" (p. 6). Using a grounded theory approach, they examined the literature on initial professional preparation for twelve professional fields, including education, and also surveyed over 2,000 faculty in 10 of these fields to determine what outcomes are addressed in professional programs. The result of their research was a set of 11 professional preparation outcomes: six in the category of "professional competences" and five in the category of "professional attitudes." Table 1 lists the outcomes and describes each one briefly.

TABLE 1

PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION OUTCOMES

Professional Competences

* Conceptual competence--Understanding the theoretical foundations of the profession
* Technical competence--Ability to perform tasks required of the professional
* Contextual competence--Understanding the social context (environment) in which the profession is practiced
* Interpersonal communication competence--Ability to use written and oral communication effectively
* Integrative competence--Ability to meld theory and technical skills in actual practice
* Adaptive competence--Ability to anticipate and accommodate changes (for example, technological changes) important to the profession

Professional Attitudes

* Career marketability--The degree to which a graduate becomes marketable as a result of acquired training
* Professional identity--The degree to which a graduate internalizes the norms of a profession
* Ethical standards--The degree to which a graduate internalizes the ethics of a profession
* Scholarly concern for improvement--The degree to which a graduate recognizes the need to increase knowledge in the profession through research
* Motivation for continued learning--The degree to which a graduate desires to continue to update knowledge and skills

From Responsive Professional Education (p. 13) by J. S. Stark, M. A. Lowther, and B. M. K. Hagerty, 1986, Washington, DC: Association for the Study of Higher Education

Using this perspective on the outcomes of professional preparation, I asked, "Which of these outcomes are addressed in the literature on higher education doctoral programs?" The answer to this question may give some indication as to what outcomes can be expected of graduates of higher education programs.

Professional Competences

In the literature on higher education programs, professional competences are more frequently discussed than are professional attitudes. Of these competences, **conceptual competence** or "understanding the theoretical foundations of the profession" has received the most attention. According to Stark, Lowther, and Hagerty (1986, pp. 22-24), literature on this competence deals with three main topics: 1) program validity, i.e., the purpose or mission of the professional field, 2) knowledge of the profession's theoretical foundations, and 3) attitudes and cognitive abilities required of students upon program entry. Only the first two of these have been treated in writings about higher education programs.

Program validity or the purposes of doctoral programs in higher education has been the subject of several descriptive surveys (e.g., Armstrong, 1974; Crosson and Nelson, 1986; Currie, 1968; Rogers, 1969; Travelstead, 1974) and prescriptive statements (e.g., Kellams, 1974; Roaden and Larimore, 1973). Dressel and Mayhew (1974) combine both description and prescription in their typology of higher education programs. As

a result of their study of higher education programs in the early 1970s, they developed a typology of existing higher education programs, including their program objectives. Dressel and Mayhew view the purpose or objective of the first of their perceived three program types as preparing senior-level administrators for colleges and universities nationally as well as for government agencies and other education-related organizations. The second type of program has a different purpose: training administrators and faculty for local or regional college-level institutions, including the community college. The third type of program serves quite a different function from the other two. It offers "training" in college teaching as well as a few courses about higher education to those preparing to be college teachers, particularly at the two-year college level. It may also offer higher education courses at the undergraduate level. Other than naming a few institutions whose programs were of the first or second type, Dressel and Mayhew do not apply this typology to the programs identified in their study. They state that only four to six programs of the first type are necessary and that the third type of program "should be the most common and perhaps the most desirable" (p. 152).

Other studies suggest the need for two or more types of programs. Research by Peters and Peterson (1987b) reveals a "fissure" (p. 14) between faculty and students over the purpose of higher education programs. Verbal or written responses (via phone interviews or letters) from over 150 faculty and students

in these programs indicated that faculty strive to seek a balance between preparation of scholar-researchers who will focus upon the field of higher education as a whole and practitioner-professionals who will function in a specific institutional setting. Students, however, see the programs as oriented primarily toward institution-centered practitioners. Seventy-one percent of the faculty in Newell and Kuh's (1989) survey of higher education faculty also see their programs as practitioner-oriented. However, like the faculty in Peters and Peterson's study, the majority of them prefer a greater balance between preparation of practitioners and of researchers and professors. In other words, the overarching purpose of most programs is to train practitioners,[2] but many faculty in these programs would prefer greater emphasis upon training researchers/scholars/professors.

Since it is difficult for a higher education program to serve both purposes well, Kellams (1973) proposes a model of two types of higher education programs. The primary thrust of Type I would be creation of the knowledge base, while that of Type II would be transmittal of this base. Future professors of higher education as well as other researchers and scholars of higher education would be trained in Type I programs, while "professional higher educators" (p. 35)--individuals such as institutional researchers, members of certain education-related organizations, and some college and university administrators--would be trained in Type II programs.

Dill and Morrison also see a need for two types of programs, although they would distinguish them by means of different degrees: the EdD for the practitioner/administrator and the PhD for the scholar/administrator. Each degree program would have its own "distinctive research requirements and expectations" (p. 181).

Thus the literature on the purpose or program validity of higher education programs indicates a conflict over programmatic purposes and a concern that the two major purposes of preparing higher education administrators and preparing higher education researchers cannot be well served in the same program. This conflict in purposes also creates problems for students in these programs since the conceptual competence appropriate for the role of higher education administrator would seem to be different from that necessary for a higher education researcher.

Discussions of the appropriate conceptual competence for a student also focus upon the required knowledge of a profession's theoretical foundations. In discussing the knowledge base necessary for preparation in a particular profession, the literature may include arguments for the "value and role of certain courses," for "the incorporation of social science content as a conceptual foundation," and for "changes in practitioners' roles that imply needs for new theoretical foundations" (Stark, Lowther, and Hagerty, 1986, p. 24).

The literature on higher education programs includes several arguments for the inclusion of particular courses. Suggested

courses include ones on the history of higher education (Stanton, 1980; Thelin, 1980), law and higher education (Sorenson, 1984), and enrollment management (Goldman, 1988) as well as core seminars (Crosson, 1983) and overview courses on higher education in the United States (Sanford, 1982). The context for these arguments is sometimes the acknowledgement of the field's lack of "an identifiable core of theory and knowledge base" (e.g., Crosson, 1983), a recurring theme in writings about the study of higher education (e.g., Boland, 1979; Dressel and Mayhew, 1973; Henderson, 1963; Hobbs and Francis, 1973; McConnell, 1963).

Related to this acknowledgement is the dominant question plaguing those associated with higher education programs: What is the nature of higher education as an area of graduate study? While variously labelled as a "discipline" (Dibden, 1965), an "emerging scholarly specialty" (Slaughter and Silva, 1983), "an emerging scholarly field but . . . [not] a specialized field of study" (Burnett, 1972), a "multidisciplinary field " (Hobbs and Francis, 1973), and "an area of inquiry with a discipline focus" (Fife, 1988), it is most frequently called a "field of study" (Conrad, 1988; Crosson, 1983; Dill and Morrison, 1985; Haynes, 1985; Hounsell, 1977; Newell and Morgan, 1983; Peterson, 1973). Many who debate whether higher education is a discipline, a field of study, or some other designation do so from the perspective of researchers, concerned with the most appropriate methods of inquiry (Conrad, 1989). Few examine this question from the perspective of curriculum, yet it is the key question about which

most, if not all, curriculum decisions hinge. Those who argue for higher education as a discipline would claim for it a specific knowledge base and methods of inquiry to be learned by all who study higher education. Agreement upon and delineation of these concepts and methods would simplify curricular decision making. Commitment to the view that higher education is not a discipline but simply a field of study also has implications for the curriculum. The primary one is acknowledgement that study in this field is not confined to future scholars and researchers but should also embrace current and would-be administrators who desire training to become more effective practitioners, i.e., administrators. As stated earlier, higher education programs must accommodate the curricular needs of both types of students.

Determination and clarification of the theoretical foundations of a particular professional field also includes efforts to incorporate social science content into the knowledge base. For higher education programs, the perspective of higher education as a multi-disciplinary field of study (e.g, Dill and Morrison, 1985; Hobbs and Francis, 1973) permits such an incorporation.

Discussions of the second professional competence, **technical competence**, include identifying what particular abilities--psychomotor, interpersonal, or cognitive--are needed to perform the work of a particular profession. While there is no mention of needed psychomotor abilities in the literature on higher education programs, there is an occasional reference to

the need for interpersonal skills (e.g., Hamlin et al, 1979). The most frequently mentioned cognitive ability is that of general research skills (e.g., Dill and Morrison, 1985; Dressel and Mayhew, 1974). Occasionally the need for other skills is indicated: various analytical skills or techniques (Dill and Morrison, 1985; Hamlin et al, 1979; March 1974), writing skills (Hamlin et al, 1979), planning and evaluation skills (Dill, 1979; Hamlin et al, 1979), and decision-making skills (Dill, 1978). Programs' failure to pay more attention to specific abilities occasionally elicits an expression of concern that "we are teaching people about (author's italics) rather than developing their ability to function effectively in leadership positions" (Birnbaum, 1982).

Literature on the third outcome, **contextual** competence, or an understanding of the environment or societal context in which a profession is practiced, focuses on curricular ways to achieve this outcome. Should this understanding be derived by emphasizing or increasing the profession's connection with the liberal arts, or by treating the social and environmental context within the professional curriculum (Stark, Lowther, and Hagerty, 1986, pp. 32-35)?

In the literature on higher education programs, arguments to increase the liberal arts connection or at least students' awareness of the liberal arts are occasionally made. Shoenberg (1981) argues, somewhat facetiously, for a course called "Literature and Academic Administration," in which

administrators would read such works as Conrad's The Secret Agent or Shakespeare's Lancastrian tetralogy to become educated in the ways of administration. Similarly, Peters (1983) suggests using two of C. P. Snow's academic novels (The Masters and The Affair) to teach about higher education. Thelin (1976) uses the example of a course in the history of higher education to urge the introduction of liberal studies into the higher education curriculum.

While **interpersonal competence**, or the "ability to use written and oral communication effectively" is rarely mentioned in the literature about higher education programs, opportunities to develop **integrative competence**, or the "ability to meld theory and technical skills in actual practice," are urged through the inclusion of internships (Miller, 1974; Sorrells, 1974), games and simulations in teaching (Birnbaum, 1982), and case studies (Finkelstein and Davis, 1978).

The last of the six professional competences is **adaptive competence**, or the "ability to anticipate and accommodate changes important to the profession." Arguments to include certain courses in higher education programs may use this outcome as part of their rationale for a specific course. For example, Sorenson's (1984) support of courses examining law and higher education stems from her belief that societal changes such as increasing litigation affect the profession. Administrators need to have some knowledge of the laws affecting higher education to adapt to this change.

Thus an examination of the literature on higher education programs to see which professional competences seem to be emphasized indicates the following:

1. Discussion about the knowledge base in the field of higher education dominates the literature. Rationales for inclusion of certain areas of knowledge may include the need for **adaptive competence, contextual, or conceptual competence.** The kind of knowledge to be expected of program graduates would be an understanding of the practical application of theory in typical areas of administrative responsibility, e.g., enrollment management, curriculum planning and evaluation, budget and finance.
2. The skills (viewed in terms of **technical competence** and **interpersonal communication competence**) that are most emphasized are those emphasized in graduate programs generally: research skills and writing skills sufficient to manage course work.
3. Some attention is paid to students developing **integrative competence**, or applying theory in practice, through internships, case studies, and simulation exercises.
4. The outcome of **conceptual competence** has received the most attention. Emphasis upon topics related to conceptual competence most likely stems from the relative newness of higher education as a professional

field of study. In order for higher education administration to be considered as a profession, it must be perceived as having a sufficient conceptual base so that on-the-job training alone does not produce a capable professional (Stark, Lowther, and Hagerty, 1986, p. 28). Additionally, efforts to develop this conceptual base are part of the development of any newly established professional field, most of which "appear to lack structured paradigms and consensus as to the appropriate knowledge and skills required for practice" (p. 59).

Professional Attitudes

Professional preparation programs seek to do more than develop certain competences in their students; the programs also seek to develop certain professional attitudes. Of the five outcomes classified as professional attitudes, only two have been treated in any detail in literature on higher education programs. The outcomes of **career marketability**, **ethical standards**, and **motivation for continued learning** are rarely touched upon.[3] The outcome of **scholarly concern for improvement**, or "the degree to which a graduate recognizes the need to increase knowledge in the profession through research," is suggested in discussions which urge the development of research skills in students (e.g. Dill and Morrison, 1985; Dressel and Mayhew, 1974).

The professional attitude which receives the most attention is that of **professional identity** or "the degree to which a

graduate internalizes the norms of a profession." This outcome is treated in relation to the purposes of higher education programs (Dill and Morrison, 1985; Kellams, 1973; Peters and Peterson, 1987; Roaden and Larimore, 1973). The issue appears to be, What is the appropriate professional identity for would-be graduates: that of a researcher/scholar or that of a practitioner/administrator? As Roaden and Larimore (1973) point out in their discussion of the purposes of higher education programs, the socialization process appropriate for preparing researchers is inappropriate for preparing administrators. Therefore, programs to prepare higher education researchers and administrators would, of necessity, be "markedly different" (p. 62). Lack of agreement about program purposes can only result in confusion over appropriate professional identity for program graduates.

Thus classification of the literature on higher education programs according to the list of professional preparation outcomes developed by Stark, Lowther, and Hagerty indicates the following regarding programmatic outcomes related to professional attitudes.

> 1. With the exception of the attitude of **professional identity**, the development of professional attitudes would not be the result of programmatic planning or emphasis since professional attitudes do not seem to be a topic of interest or concern. However, programmatic emphasis on research skills may help students to

internalize the attitude of **scholarly concern for improvement.**

2. In programs whose dominant purpose is agreed upon and supported by its faculty, graduates should develop a clear sense of **professional identity.** In those programs whose purpose is not clearly defined or supported by its faculty, graduates may well suffer confusion in professional identity. For example, they may enter the program as mid-level administrators and expect to receive preparation for future higher education administrative positions. However, once in the program, they may be socialized to the norms of research-oriented faculty desirous of educating future higher education scholars rather than administrators. Students in such programs may emerge upon program completion with an unclear sense of what is their appropriate reference group.

Implications for Higher Education Doctoral Programs

Lack of agreement about programmatic purposes affects the ability of higher education programs to evaluate themselves and thus to develop evidence of their effectiveness. As Burnett (1973) has noted, "As long as there is confusion and lack of agreement about objectives and graduate training programs, Higher Education will exist in Inferno . . . . Until an area of study can reach some agreement about objectives and learning

experiences, evaluation as professional endeavor is impossible" (p. 12).

Additionally, the effectiveness of program graduates and thus of programs cannot be fully assessed until we have a better understanding of what knowledge and skills are needed in college and university administration. Currently the skills emphasized in most higher education doctoral programs seem to be those emphasized in any graduate program, namely research and written communication skills, or those based on knowledge of a particular area such as budgeting (Nelson and Crosson, 1984). We need to determine if this knowledge base and these skills are sufficient to prepare program graduates not only to be effective administrators but more effective ones than administrators who are not graduates of higher education programs.

One hindrance to assessing the effectiveness of graduates may well be higher education faculty themselves, for, as indicated earlier, not all of them are uniformly committed to the programmatic purpose of preparing administrators. Faculty in higher education programs are not unique in their inability to agree on programmatic purposes or their failure thus far to take one of the first steps in outcomes-based evaluation, the identification of objectives and learning experiences or skills and competencies needed by their graduates. Currently nursing is the only profession that has systemically developed its curricula on the basis of identified skills for members of its profession (Mayhew and Ford, 1974). Yet it is ironic that a field of study

which teaches the importance of curriculum planning would be so remiss in the curriculum development of its own programs. Until and unless higher education doctoral programs can document the knowledge and skills needed in college and university administration, and until and unless the knowledge and skills are indeed taught in these programs, study in higher education will be subject to question as valid professional preparation for higher education administration.

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Endnotes

1. Only one of the programs described in the one-page profiles generated through the efforts of Crosson and Nelson (1984) is competency-based: the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas, Austin. However, Hamlin, Mauch, Pulliam, and Yeager (1979) have proposed a higher education administration curriculum with major objectives, specific outcomes, and required knowledge and skills for 10 areas to be required of all students in the program. Also Haynes (1985), after identifying the knowledge and skills needed for administration in general and then for specific higher education administrative positions, presents an illustrative graduate program which incorporates this knowledge and skills.

2. Crosson and Nelson (1986) used program descriptions and responses from a survey of program directors to develop a descriptive overview of higher education doctoral programs in the mid-1980s. The major stated purpose of 85 percent of these programs was the preparation of leaders for higher education. Whether these leaders might be faculty as well as administrative leaders or might be education scholars was not clear in the program directors' responses. Forty-six percent of the programs also indicated one purpose was the preparation of faculty and researchers who would study higher education, while 18 percent indicated they prepared leaders for agencies dealing with higher education.

3. The professional attitude of career marketability, defined as students' awareness of how to make themselves marketable as a result of their professional preparation, is indicated as a desired outcome in two courses cited by Kellams (1980) in his examination of approximately a dozen higher education introductory courses. Hamlin et al (1979) identify the professional attitude regarding ethical standards as one of ten major objectives to be addressed in a proposed curriculum for higher education administrators.